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Just a week after the country honored its veterans, local, federal and military officials dedicated a memorial honoring World War II veterans, in particular the black Naval officers known as the Golden Thirteen.

The dedication was held Saturday in North Chicago's Veterans Memorial Park. Congressman Mark Kirk, North Chicago Mayor Leon Rockingham and Susan Sublett, the widow of Frank Sublett, a member of the Golden Thirteen, all spoke.

Kirk, a 10th District Republican from Highland Park, said North Chicago's is the nation's only formal memorial to black World War II veterans.

The monument, a 22-foot-tall obelisk-type memorial of black granite, lists the names of 13 black servicemen who broke the color barrier to become the first U.S. Naval officers.

It also has a plaque honoring the 100,000 black sailors who trained at Camp Moffett during WWII.

The congressman said the story of these pioneers inspired him to secure a \$97,000 federal grant for the memorial.

"This is a way to thank them," said Kirk, himself a Naval Reserve officer. "We know for these World War II men, they were fighting the Nazis in the Atlantic, the Japanese in the Pacific and racism in their own home."

The memorial, at Sheridan Road and Broadway Avenue, was designed by Sutter Architects of Libertyville. It has benches and a "Walk of Honor" featuring bricks engraved with names of

those who donated to the project.

The proximity to North Chicago's Great Lakes Naval Station is important, Kirk said. This way, the memorial will be one of the first things recruits see during their training.

"This will teach them something about our country," he said.

Before the Golden Thirteen "changed the attitude of the Navy," black enlisted men were limited to mess hall duty and working in the engine rooms of ships, Kirk said.

Frank Sublett of Glencoe, the last surviving member of the Golden Thirteen, died of natural causes on Sept. 27, at HCR Manor Care nursing home in Skokie at age 86, said his wife, Susan Sublett.

"I wish he could have been here to say thank you," she said.

The city of North Chicago deeded the land for the park and also donated \$19,000.

"I am honored to be part of the nation's first war memorial to black veterans," Mayor Leon Rockingham said. "The monument serves as a stepping stone in the city's revitalization."